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Letter dated 17 April 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to inform you that the Government of Italy has decided to present its candidacy for membership in the Human Rights Council for the term 2007-2010 at the election to be held during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly in May 2007 (see annex).

I therefore enclose an aide-memoire on Italy's voluntary pledges and commitments, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006. I would be grateful if you could arrange for the present letter and its annex to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Marcello **Spatafora**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 17 April 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Italian candidature to the Human Rights Council

Italy has decided to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term 2007-2010 (election to be held on 17 May 2007).

By its resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006 the General Assembly established the Human Rights Council, creating an historic opportunity to improve the effectiveness and strength of the human rights protection system within the United Nations. Italy believes that its membership in the Council will contribute to better responding to the Council's task of promoting universal respect for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, addressing violations and making recommendations according to the principles of universality, impartiality and objectivity through constructive international dialogue and cooperation.

Human rights in Italy and in Italian foreign policy

Italy has a long and rooted domestic tradition of respect and advancement of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as proved by its history and its legal culture. Recent developments in the international debate confirm the increasing importance attached to the protection of human rights throughout the world, a key element of the foreign policy for our country. Italy considers respect for human rights to be crucial to ensure peace, prevent conflict and foster the growth of stable societies worldwide: the focus of our international action lies therefore on the promotion of democracy and fundamental rights in multilateral forums, mainly within the United Nations.

Promoting and protecting human rights throughout the world is therefore crucial to Italian foreign policy, as demonstrated by the very active role played by Italy as member of the Commission on Human Rights, where Italy sat almost uninterruptedly since 1957, and during the negotiations that finally led to the establishment of the new Human Rights Council.

Italy and the United Nations

Italy has decided to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council since it intends to keep playing a dynamic role in the field of the protection of human rights, by actively contributing to increasing the effectiveness and coordination of the Council's actions. Italy believes that the United Nations is the principal forum of action in the sphere of human rights, and that the Human Rights Council can and must be the key player. As a member of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, Italy will also support technical cooperation programmes in the field of the rule of law, aimed at fostering stable democratic societies.

Italy has acquired consistent experience as a committed member of the Commission on Human Rights for several mandates, and fully cooperated with the Commission's special procedures. In line with a decision of the European Union (EU), Italy extended to the United Nations Special Rapporteurs an open invitation to visit the country and conduct their investigations at any time. Consequently, Italy

received the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Param Cumaraswamy, on two occasions in 2002, the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Ambeyi Ligabo (October 2004), the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Gabriela Rodriguez Pizarro (June 2004), and the visit of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Doudou Diène (September 2006).

International framework for the protection of human rights in Italy

Italy adheres to six major United Nations Conventions for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and to most of their Optional Protocols.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1978)

Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1978) and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1995)

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1978)

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1985)

Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1989)

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2000)

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1976)

Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991)

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2002)

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2002)

In terms of monitoring of their implementation and cooperation with the treaty bodies, Italy has a very good record of returning national reports under United Nations conventions in full and on time.

Italy supports the International Criminal Tribunals and hosted in Rome in 1998 the United Nations conference that established the International Criminal Court — the so-called Rome Statute.

Moreover, Italy fully cooperates with the High Commissioner and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in an effective and fruitful way.

At the regional level, Italy is a member of the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and it adheres to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its additional Protocols.

Italy traditionally supports all the initiatives in the framework of the European Union — monitoring, demarches, structured dialogues, technical cooperation, the presentation of draft resolutions and others — aimed at the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide. On the initiative of the last Italian Presidency of the European Union, in December 2003, the European Union adopted a set of Guidelines on children involved in armed conflicts, and the fifth edition of the EU Human Rights Forum was organized in Rome on the issue of the protection of children under international law.

Italy devotes special attention to specific issues in the field of human rights such as the rights of children, gender equality and the rights of people with disabilities. Italy supports, among others, the United Nations bodies and agencies of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNIFEM, WHO and FAO, attributing particular importance to development cooperation and its link with basic rights. With specific reference to gender equality, for instance, Italian development cooperation invests in programmes of decentralized cooperation, which consist of initiating and favouring interventions at the local level for the empowerment of women along the lines of United Nations agencies, aiming at the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, Italy hereby submits an aide-memoire on a specific set of voluntary pledges and commitments it is ready to undertake, in order to further improve its long-term commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights.

Italy would be most grateful for the support of the United Nations Member States for its candidature to the Human Rights Council.

Enclosure

Aide-memoire

Voluntary pledges and commitments in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251

Having submitted its candidature to the Human Rights Council of the United Nations, Italy engages to continue to strive for the highest standards of human rights and to fully cooperate with the United Nations system in order to make it increasingly effective, both within the Human Rights Council and the other relevant United Nations bodies, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and United Nations agencies and programmes.

Italy is the sixth net contributor to the ordinary budget of the United Nations system and ensures significant financial support, on a voluntary basis, to other activities of the organization.

More specifically, in 2007 Italy has increased its pledge to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Hence, Italy's efforts towards the strengthening of the Human Rights Council within the United Nations will be focused on the following pledges and commitments.

In the United Nations and internationally, Italy will:

- Work in the most cooperative way with the Human Rights Council and all the mechanisms that will be established under it.
- Strive to enhance the relevance and the effectiveness of thematic action in different sets of countries, in order to keep international focus on specific relevant human rights issues.
- Contribute to improving the membership of the Human Rights Council through encouraging States with good human rights records to apply for membership.
- Support the work of the Special Procedures which will be established by the Human Rights Council.
- Encourage third countries to report more frequently and extensively to the United Nations treaty bodies, follow up the recommendations of the treaty bodies, and invite and accept visits of the United Nations Special Rapporteurs.
- Combat impunity, including by promoting the universalization of signatures and ratifications of the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

In particular, Italy strives to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide, with special focus on issues of particular concern, namely:

- **Promoting the rule of law and strengthening of democracy**
  - Maintaining its support to electoral observation missions and follow-up in countries in transition or not fully developed democracies.
  - Strengthening Parliaments, political parties, civil society and other democratic institutions, with special focus on strengthening justice systems, in countries in post-conflict or transition situation, through specific training.

– In 2007, Italy will contribute to the new United Nations Peacebuilding Fund.

– After completing the appropriate domestic procedures, Italy will also sign the Convention on Enforced Disappearances, opened to signature in February 2007.

• **Protection of children's rights, especially children involved in armed conflicts**

– Keeping a high profile both of political initiatives and cooperation programmes, especially through cooperation with and support to UNICEF.

– Italy finances a number of initiatives and programmes for children and adolescents victims of armed conflict through international organizations.

– For the year 2007, Italy has increased its traditional support to UNICEF.

• **Combating xenophobia, racism and all forms of discrimination**

– Promoting increased support of resolutions against racism, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination presented at the Human Rights Council, highlighting in particular specific actions needed to eliminate any form of discrimination.

– In this respect, Italy was among the first signatories of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (New York, 30 March 2007).

• **Combating torture**

– Striving to increase the number of countries that have ratified and implemented the Convention against Torture.

– Since 2004, Italy contributes on a voluntary basis to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.

• **Combating gender-based discrimination**

– Promoting concrete actions to prevent and combat violence against women and international trafficking of human beings, and through its support to UNIFEM and UNFPA.

• **Abolition of the death penalty**

– Striving to increase the number of abolitionist countries, eventually requesting countries not yet willing to abolish the death penalty to apply a moratorium as an intermediate objective.

Domestically, Italy is preparing the adaptation/adjustment of its legislation in order to:

– Complete the normative process for the implementation of the Statute of the International Criminal Court

– Achieve ratification and implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

– Establish the National Independent Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.